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WHAT AILS THE WORLD?

BY REV. MARTIN J. SCOTT, S. J.

[This is the second article to appear in the series on World Restoration. The first, "Judaism and World Restoration," by the eminent rabbi, the Rev. Dr. Joseph Silverman, was published in the August issue. In October the Rev. S. Parkes Cadman will write on "Protestantism and the World's Necessities." —The Editors.]

THE world is an invalid to-day more than ever. What ails it? World specialists are prescribing various remedies for its cure. In vain. They neither diagnose its disease nor are capable of prescribing for it. Physicians have a phrase which illustrates the remedies and efforts of various governments to heal the world of its present illness. They call a prescription used by certain doctors a shot-gun prescription; it is hoped that some of the many ingredients may hit the mark. There are other physicians who, instead of attacking the cause of an illness, prescribe for its various symptoms.

It is not advisable ordinarily for a physician to prescribe for himself. It is also inadvisable for him to prescribe for one of his own family who is seriously ill, for the reason that, being over-interested in the patient, he is apt to regard conditions too favorably or too unfavorably. The great difficulty with the world to-day is that it is prescribing for its own illness. It is a truism to say that mankind is selfish, and that nations are as selfish as the individuals who compose them. If selfish governments meet in council, they will most likely prescribe a shot-gun remedy.

They may temporize and compromise, but they are not apt to remedy an evil the root of which is selfishness. The Hague is proof. Never was more done, humanly speaking, to assure peace than at The Hague. And never in the history of mankind did such a flood of war rush over the world as after The Hague. The reason is that selfish humanity refuses to prescribe or take the remedy for selfishness.

Man wants justice; yes. But generally he wants it for himself. Justice requires that man or nation subordinate personal or national advantages to right and truth. That means frequently the sacrifice of personal or national interests. And "there's the rub". In the councils of nations, each government is inclined to seek its own interests. Hence, only a partial or temporary agreement may be effected. But compromise never cures. It simply covers. What will cure? Justice. And how is justice to be attained? By rising above interested and selfish aims. And what will enable governments to rise above such aims? Nothing which mere worldly policy will offer, because the world is selfish. The power so to rise must come from above. Human nature cannot rise above its own level unaided.

Justice among individuals is maintained by laws. How is it to be maintained among nations? Either by force or law. By force means war, the very thing we seek to avoid. By law means by an authority which can legislate for nations as government does for individuals. Where is that authority? No merely human authority exists for such legislation. Nations may combine and make a pact, and create an authority, but such authority rests on selfish agreement, and its foundation is sand.

Is there no hope, then? There is. The Author of human nature, knowing its limitations, has provided. In the Old Law the voice of God proclaimed from Sinai the law which makes for individual and national peace. In the New Law Christ supplemented the divine authority of Jehovah by His message of peace to men of good will. He came the Prince of Peace. His laws will bring peace among people and among nations. He is the Great Physician of mankind. He prescribes for welfare here and hereafter. He is the World Ruler. His is the only super-government.

In proportion as God and His justice are acknowledged and respected by governments, will the world have peace. What government is to people, that, and a great deal more, God is to the governments themselves. If people do not respect government, anarchy results. And because governments do not respect God and His justice, wars result. Governments will be selfish to the end of the world, and wars will continue to the end. One power alone is capable of restraining that selfishness. But it calls for good will on man's part. That power is the World Ruler, God. If His rule, which is justice, is acknowledged by the nations, they will have peace, not otherwise. But expediency, not justice, is the policy of governments. Hence, God is ruled out of the councils of nations. Therefore, the world after Versailles was upside down and remains so. God was excluded from that gathering of governments. And peace was excluded, too.

Witness the world to-day. Whatever semblance of peace exists is merely exhaustion. The nations for the most part are champing for revenge or for aggrandizement. The worldly view sees only present advantages and sanctions. God bids us regard life as a pilgrimage to eternity, which will be happy or miserable in accordance as we live by justice or expediency. He tells us that people and governments must answer to Him for their conduct, and that on it depends everlasting welfare. Conduct based on justice is His command and His panacea. But governments whose outlook is bounded by the horizon of this life, and who close their eyes to justice, will not bring about peace worthy of the name, as we see in effect to-day, when the so-called peace is but a period of recuperation for war.

Is there no remedy, therefore? That depends. Must wars go on? Unless man respects a power above. And because mankind is not seeking first God and His justice, wars abound and will abound. The efforts of man may mitigate war and make it less frequent, but will never abolish it. Life is a warfare. But this is certain that in proportion as justice dominates people and governments, will strife and war cease, and there is nothing in the world so efficacious to make justice supreme among mankind as Christianity. Religion has been banished from governments of late, and in consequence the world has been afflicted by the

most dreadful conflict recorded in history. Man by worldly methods has done his utmost and failed miserably. It is time to turn to God. He desires to give us peace. But men must acknowledge Him as King if they are to have peace. This does not imply that man is to sit with folded arms and look to God to adjust world affairs. God wants man to do all in his power for justice, to work as hard for peace as if it depended on his unaided efforts, but to know that for success peace must be the result of serving and reverencing Him, the Ruler of Nations.

A great deal of the distress of nations to-day is due to the fact that subjects have lost respect for legitimate authority. Governments fail to realize that in leaving God out of their deliberations and policies they have taught their subjects to do the same. In doing this, they have undermined their own authority, as is evident from the shaky foundation on which many governments rest to-day.

National as well as international peace rests on respect for legitimate authority. If nations want loyalty from subjects, and justice from one another, the surest way to both is loyalty to God. The government that reverences God will not be an aggressor nor a delinquent. The government that reverences God will regulate its aims and policies by the laws of eternal justice.

Justice, the justice that is of God, will restrain national selfishness, and in consequence prevent the clash of nations. But in order that justice reign, man must realize that there is a Just Monarch of Mankind, Whose authority cannot be defied with impunity. If the Creator has permitted mankind to be infected with selfishness, He has also given an antidote. That antidote is respect for the Lawgiver of Mankind. Subjects have disregarded Him, and national disasters have resulted. Nations have discarded Him, and the World War was the penalty. The way to peace is God's way, good will shown by respecting God's authority. That will bring peace, and only that. Governments must realize that there is a sanction above for right. They must know that although they may violate justice and carry out selfish policies, they cannot ignore the Lawgiver of the World with impunity. The wages of sin is death. Every individual knows that. It holds for governments as well. Consult history.

Are we to be pessimistic, therefore, and let a selfish world run to ruin? By no means. Governments are made up of individuals. Each individual by respecting God and His justice will be doing his part to better his government and the world. If the individual ignores justice, he must not be surprised if government does also. Now there is no power among mankind so efficacious for establishing justice as Christianity. History confirms this. Wars there have always been and will be. Christ the Prince of Peace has declared it. Nevertheless, Christianity has done more to minimize war and its atrocities than any other power in the world.

Before Christ, war was the occupation of nations. The Roman Empire was at peace only three short periods during seven hundred years. Powerful nations sought more dominion, weak nations fought for existence. It was the rule of might. The only peace was that of exhaustion or slavery. Unless we go back to pre-Christian times, we can have no idea of what Christianity has done for the world's welfare. Bad as conditions are now, they were incalculably worse before Christ. Treaties mean much or little now. They meant nothing then. Justice had no meaning except it was supported by force. The existence of a small nation like Switzerland cannot be imagined in pre-Christian times. It would have been absorbed or annihilated.

If a powerful nation now attempted to absorb or destroy a smaller nation, it would evoke protest and opposition. And why? It would outrage prevailing sentiment. And what created civilized sentiment as it is to-day? Christianity. Before Christ, the ruler of a nation was not only a tyrant but a god. He acknowledged no power above him. In point of fact the Roman Emperors were deified. Their word was law. They made wrong right, or right wrong. And there was no one to gainsay them. True, an assassin's dagger sometimes stopped them. But there was nothing in the machinery of government or the times to restrain injustice. Christianity proclaimed to the ruler on the throne that he was subject to a Higher Power. It declared to these gods of clay that they had an accountability. It placed the standard of justice before ruler and subject alike, and informed them that they violated it at their eternal peril.

Gradually as the Church of Christ made peaceful conquest of the world, it replaced might by right. Not all at once, nor at any time entirely. It was hard work and long work. First it had to change the ideals of the pagan Romans, and afterwards to soften the brutality of the invading barbarians. But it introduced a new thing into the world, justice. It erected a new tribunal for individual, nation and world, the tribunal of right.

Until the Catholic Bishop Ambrose withstood the Roman Emperor Theodosius to his face there never was a power in the world which said effectively to a tyrant, "It is unjust; thou shalt not." This was a new idea among mankind. A ruler acknowledging a Super-Ruler! A king or emperor was after all not a god, not the arbiter of right or wrong.

I wonder if we who are the heirs of all the beneficence which Christianity has wrought and brought are not sometimes not only unmindful of but also ungrateful to Christ. We glory in the brotherhood of man. Liberty, equality, fraternity! But it was Christ who first declared the brotherhood of man. It was His Church which abolished slavery. One third of the world was in slavery before the Catholic Church gradually enfranchised them. Things do not merely happen. It is not civilization which has brought justice and liberty into the world. Civilization was at its height in the pagan Roman Empire when justice and freedom were trampled underfoot. It was the Catholic Church preaching the justice and brotherhood proclaimed by Christ which brought about respect for justice and freedom for the individual.

But what has all this to do with the problem we are facing? Everything. Peace is not more difficult of attainment than justice or freedom. The Catholic Church gave us justice and freedom, and it can give us peace. I am addressing readers some of whom are not of my faith. In this brief article I cannot substantiate all my statements. But read history aright and you will find the corroboration of all I say. Read Balmes's *History of European Civilization*, and you will say I am understating rather than exaggerating my claims. The Catholic Church gave us the ideals of justice and brotherhood which the modern world cherishes.

It gave us the ideals. That does not mean that justice and fraternity have always prevailed. But if with the ideals things

are as they are, what would the world be without them! In point of fact the Church has not only given us the ideals but has contributed powerfully to their realization. Yes, I know the abuses of rulers and nations and individuals in Church and State the past twenty centuries; but mankind is mankind. We, individually and collectively, are prone to evil. We are morally free. Human passion often hurls us headlong. But look over the past twenty centuries and you will find that never before in the history of the world was justice or the individual held in such respect. Wars and crimes there have been. But the wars and crimes which the Church prevented were innumerable. Even when war was unavoidable, the Church mitigated its horrors.

Before Christianity, war was a shambles and worse. Prisoners were put to death or sent into slavery. Women and children were butchered or reserved for a worse fate. Since, prisoners have been almost envied, and women and children held sacred even by their conquerors. What did that? The Catholic Church. It put the fear of the Lord in subjects and rulers. When war was inevitable, this same Church caused it to be less disastrous by the Truce of God, which called a halt to the clash of arms. When the Papacy, the much abused and much misunderstood Papacy, was supreme, it time and again prevented war. It used its mighty power to check acts of injustice on the throne, to make hostile rulers listen to reason, to halt the hand of the powerful aggressor, and in various ways to make justice reign instead of force. It was the one super-power among nations in the ages of faith, and on the whole that power was employed for the maintenance of peace by upholding the law of right and the brotherhood of man. Space does not permit me to say more.

A new era has come. The old ideals have been crowded out. Materialism is the god now worshipped. Greatness is measured by size. The man is great who has much. The nation is great that is rich. There is no room except for bulk. Material standards dominate the world. Result: Among individuals a mad race for wealth regardless of honesty; and among nations a struggle for territory, trade and resources regardless of justice. Materialism is enthroned. Behold its votaries! Conscienceless governments, bleeding nations, discouraged peoples, lawless individuals.

Materialism is the new god! And what does it give its worshippers? In a world which abounds in natural resources and teems with sustenance for mankind it gives stone for bread. Never before was it so evident that "not in bread alone does man live". Guided mainly by material standards the world was never so materially destitute. Starving millions in a world of plenty! What an indictment of man's pride and selfishness!

War has done it, war which was all but universal. And what caused the war? We all know; material ideals, a return to paganism. The governments of Europe for the past few centuries have been more or less a combination of merchant and highwayman. By deception, intrigue, propaganda, downright injustice and force, they have sought to extend their territories and enrich their treasuries. And all the while the multitudes were bleeding and dying, and the productive earth was trampled on by devastating armies. And to what purpose? To gratify the ambition of rulers or feed the pride of nations.

What is the remedy? First of all there *is* a remedy: Reverence for the ideals introduced into the world by Christ. A return to *spiritual values*. These ideals cured the pagan world of the dreadful evils of slavery, butchery of prisoners of war, infant murder, the debasement of woman, and other maladies so firmly rooted that they seemed impossible of eradication.

Christian ideals are the Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood and immortality of man. If mankind realizes that the Creator and Ruler of the world is a just God Who will render to every man according to his works, mankind will respect justice, and human governments will rule by right, not by might. But if mankind believes that it is but a material part of this material world, and that life and its accountability terminate in a bit of dust, and that there is no ruling power above, the hand of every man will be against his neighbor and the policy of every government will be plunder. There will be no restraint on subject or ruler but that of expediency, which teaches that everything is lawful that is desirable and obtainable.

Here precisely is where Christianity stands forth as the world-remedy. Not desire but duty should be man's principle of action. Every Christian denomination holds that. The Catho-

lic Church not only proclaims it but by its sacramental system helps weak human nature to carry it out. Some people say that they do not believe in religion, that their religion is to be good, to be honest. But that is the very point. It is hard to be good. Everybody would be good if desiring it made them so. But virtue implies conquest of evil tendencies, conquest of self. Conscience and passion are continually at war. Man is prone to evil. The object of religion is to help man to live by the standards set by the Creator, and emphasized by Christ, in order that man may be worthy of association with God forever hereafter. Even with the aid of religion many fall by the wayside. Without it they are almost sure to collapse. If with spiritual ideals history so abounds in evil, what may we expect from earthly, material ideals? Witness the world to-day.

The purpose of the efforts and ritual of the Catholic Church is to impress on its adherents the reality of spiritual values. It endeavors to make them live in the presence of God, and to conduct themselves accordingly. In a general way it thus works for peace because it works for justice. In particular its efforts for peace are manifest by the action of the Pope on all the great issues which concern the world. The pronouncements of Leo XIII on the matters which threatened industrial peace; the untiring efforts of Benedict XV to bring about peace during the World War; and the present solicitude of Pius XI to introduce the spirit of reconciliation and fraternity among the statesmen of Europe, illustrate one phase of the constant endeavors which the Catholic Church makes for peace.

This attitude of the Holy Father is fully appreciated by those whom it concerns. They may not always act on his initiative, but it is not because they do not realize its rectitude, but because they are unwilling to be influenced by his lofty ideals. Governments as well as individuals are very human, which is another way of saying that they are very selfish. But no ideal is entirely obscured by passion. The Catholic Church holds aloft the highest spiritual ideals. This is not to say that they are always lived up to even by her own communicants. But as Christ's ideals do not suffer by the defection of Judas, neither do those of His Church by the evil lives of some individuals.

Premier Lloyd George in adverting to the pronouncement of Pius XI in regard to the Genoa Conference said, "I cannot say how pleased I am with this remarkable document nor could I exaggerate the terms in which it is couched. The Pope speaks with first-hand knowledge of conditions in Eastern Europe and I feel that so clear and definite a pronouncement by the Holy See in favor of peace with Russia is a great encouragement to the Christian powers assembled at Genoa." That is the duty for peace which the Pope is ever performing, holding up the ideals which Christ brought into the world. It was a Catholic priest, Father Luigi Sturzo, who at Genoa struck an inspirational note by proclaiming "the necessity of instituting a political internationale founded on Christian ideals: love, brotherhood, tolerance, equity and justice".

Not only does the Catholic Church work for peace but it also prays for peace, and that constantly. Its ritual abounds with prayers for peace and harmony among peoples. In its litanies it daily prays for peace. In the Mass there is a special prayer for peace, and there is, moreover, a special Peace Mass, which is celebrated in times of greatest need. It will be seen, therefore, that there is no power on earth more active or effective for peace than the Catholic Church, which always upholds legitimate authority. By its exhortations and Sacraments it endeavors to make each individual of its faith seek first God and His justice. By its various organizations it seeks to cultivate the spirit of peace in family and society. By its proclamations and appeals and delegations it holds up to governments the standards of morality preached by Christ, the Prince of Peace. In proportion as the individual and family and society and government conform their conduct to these Christian ideals will the world have peace; in no other way. The mission of the Catholic Church is to perpetuate Him and His teaching Who said, "I am the Light of the World." A beacon guides; it does not compel. If the nations walk by that light they will be in the way of peace, if not—look at the world to-day.

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